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Next 3 Page(s) In Document Denied

White House Attacks

Disclosures by Officials on Arms-Talks Stand

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Special to The New York Times

SANTA BARBARA, Calif., Aug. 31 — The White House issued an unusual and sharply worded statement today deploing the actions of Reagan Administration officials in disclosing Washington's intention to relax its nuclear arms negotiating stand in talks with the Soviet Union.

The statement by Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, said the officials' actions "ill serve the President" and added that the Administration "must question their motives" in making the positions known.

"We believe the principle of confidentiality is essential to the successful outcome of these discussions," the statement said. "We are committed to preserving this principle and, therefore, will have no comment on the discussions that take place within our Government or at the table in Geneva."

"We deplore those in the Administration who make this information public. Breaching the principle of confidentiality serves to undermine the opportunity for a successful outcome in arms control."

"Quite frankly, we must question their motives. Their actions ill serve the President, the American people and the cause of world peace."

Although Mr. Speakes did not say so, his rebuke was in apparent response to an article in today's issue of The New York Times.

Consensus on Changes Reported

The article, which was based on interviews with a wide range of American officials, said the Administration intended to modify its strategic arms negotiating position to narrow some differences with the Soviet Union. It also said there was a consensus on a number of changes in the American position.

The article said that no final decision on the ultimate American position had been reached, but that a decision would probably be made before a meeting of Soviet and American arms control officials scheduled for this Friday and Saturday in Washington.

Mr. Speakes, who had no regular White House briefing for reporters today, issued the statement while he was

here with the President, who is vacationing at his mountaintop ranch outside Santa Barbara.

The statement said that an interagency group within the Administration was discussing a United States arms control offer to the Soviet Union but that no final decisions had been made.

Mr. Speakes said an interagency group had been meeting in recent weeks to prepare for a new round of arms control talks scheduled for Sept. 18 in Geneva.

'A Critical Juncture'

Referring to the talks, Mr. Speakes said the United States "considers this new round to be important in the process of reaching an agreement for meaningful arms controls leading to total elimination of nuclear weapons."

"The September discussions come at a critical juncture in the process," the statement added.

Expressing some optimism, the statement said the Administration was pleased that the Soviet Union, in arms control proposals, had moved from "a position of limiting the expansion of the arms race to a discussion of reducing the nuclear arsenal on both sides." It provided no details, however.

"The U.S., for its part, has assigned major priority to seeking areas in which the two sides can make progress," the statement said. "We believe that our recent proposals are serious, concrete and detailed. They provide the impetus for discussions with the Soviet Union that can significantly contribute to an agreement in the future."

The Times article said the United States is prepared to increase the number of ballistic missile warheads and air-launched cruise missiles that it would allow by 25 percent and to raise the number of warheads on land-based missiles by 10 percent.

In addition, it said the Administration's tentative proposal calls for backing away from a ban on long-range mobile missiles.

The statement by Mr. Speakes said the final discussion would be made and approved by the President near the time that the talks resume.

Washington Times

WASHINGTON TIMES

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Reagan administration livid over leak on arms proposal

By Jeremiah O'Leary
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The Reagan administration reacted with almost unprecedented anger yesterday to a published report that the United States is ready to modify its strategic arms negotiating position to bring it closer to that of the Soviet Union.

"We deplore those in this administration who make this information public," White House spokesman Larry Speakes said. "Breaching the principle of confidentiality serves to undermine the opportunity for a successful outcome in arms control."

Mr. Speakes, who made his remarks in a written statement, was obviously referring to an article in yesterday's editions of the New York Times, although he did not mention the newspaper by name.

"We believe the principle of confidentiality is essential to the successful outcome of these discussions," the spokesman for the vacationing President Reagan said. "We are committed to preserving this principle and therefore will have no comment on the discussions that take place within our government or at the table in Geneva."

Referring to the unnamed sources for the Times article, he said: "Quite frankly, we must question their motives. Their actions ill-serve the president, the American people and the cause of world peace."

The newspaper said the administration intends to modify its strategic arms position to narrow differences with the Soviet Union in a new round of arms talks later this month.

The report said there was a consensus developing on the overall limits to set for missile warheads.

It said the United States would be prepared to increase the number of ballistic missile warheads and air-launched cruise missiles allowed each nation by 25 percent.



Larry Speakes

The proposal also would also raise the limit on warheads on land-based missiles by 10 percent to 3,300, compared with the most recent U.S. offer, according to the report.

The Soviets, who have 6,400 land-based warheads, recently proposed a limit of 4,500 warheads.

Officials at the Western White House here spent much of yesterday morning conferring with officials in Washington and with the president, who is vacationing at his remote ranch 29 miles from here.

The statement, issued shortly after 4 p.m. EDT, did not specifically

deny the substance of the Times article but emphasized that no final decisions have been made.

Mr. Speakes said the U.S. and Soviet negotiators will begin a new round of arms control discussions in Geneva on Sept. 18. An inter-agency arms control group has been meet-

ing for several weeks to prepare for the talks.

The new talks come at a critical juncture and are considered important in reaching an agreement for meaningful arms control that would lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Mr. Speakes said.

The statement also offered praise willingness to negotiate seriously about arms reductions.

"The recent exchanges between President Reagan and General Secretary [Mikhail] Gorbachev have served to underscore the seriousness of the discussions," the statement said.

"We are pleased that the Soviet Union has moved from a position of limiting the expansion of the arms race to a discussion of reducing the nuclear arsenals on both sides. The U.S., for its part, has assigned major priority to seeking areas in which the two sides can make progress.

"We believe our most recent proposals are serious, concrete and detailed. They provide the impetus for discussions with the Soviet Union that can significantly contribute to an agreement in the future," the statement said.

The White House is expected to make its final decisions on the new U.S. arms proposal before a meeting of U.S.-Soviet arms control officials convenes in Washington on Friday.

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